presentation. We will concentrate on the struggles of the Campbells in the 1820's. — *Jeanne Lange, Studio City, Ca.*

With help from a Church of Christ in Ethiopia, we have our own famine relief program in Zambia's western province. Ethiopia has been a famine area itself and this assistance from one African congregation to another is to be commended. — *Angela Woodhall, Kitwe, Zambia*

Blessings on you as you travel and work "Practicing the Presence of God" moved me much. Thank you for the reminder. — *Cloyd Anthony, Terre Haute, In.*

BOOK NOTES

A lively and responsible piece of work from our own ranks is *Christian, You Were Baptized in Water and Spirit* by Robert Gibson, which takes the position that we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized into Christ. He quotes from our people from Leslie G. Thomas and Leroy Garrett back to Moses Lard and Robert Richardson in support of his position. $5.95 postpaid.

While it is still Alexander Campbell's bicentennial year, we recommend three important books about him: *Captives of the Word* by Louis Cochran at $13.50; *Raccoon John Smith* and *The Fool of God*, both also by Louis Cochran at $12.50 each. But for facts and anecdotes we believe you will also appreciate what *The Stone-Campbell Movement* says about Alexander Campbell, along with much more about our history, which we will send you for $21.95 postpaid.

Ouida is impressed that we are selling so many copies of *What the Bible Says About Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* by Olan Hicks, but I am not surprised since this question is such a tragic issue among us, and this book provides some liberating answers.

That our readers are interested in history is evidenced by the fact that we continually stock Harry Boer's *A History of the Early Church*, which tells the story of the early church in concise, readable language. $8.95 postpaid.

A widely-circulated book among Churches of Christ these days is *Power to Become What God Wants You To Be*, which tells us how to unleash the power of God in our lives. This book is one more reason to believe that we are changing as a people. You can have your own copy for $5.50.

All titles reviewed in this column are available from our office.

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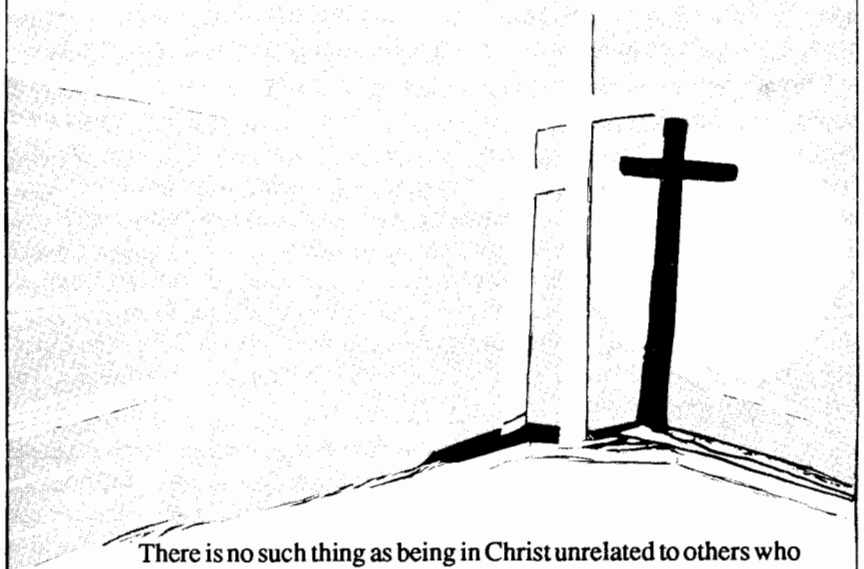

There is no such thing as being in Christ unrelated to others who are in Christ. "To be is to be in relation," and to be in Christ is to be related with everyone else who is in Christ. There is no such thing as a Christian in isolation or in insulation. You have to be in fellowship with all who are in Christ, or you are thereby not in Christ. Every cord that binds me to Christ binds me to my brother, and I can't break with one without breaking with the other.—E. Stanley Jones, *In Christ*, p. 89.

In This Issue:

Understanding Distance

Volume 30, No. 9 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **November, 1988**

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UNDERSTANDING DISTANCE

If we settled on a single principle of interpretation, one that would make a big difference in our relation to Scripture, we could hardly do better than to adopt the one emphasized by Alexander Campbell: *We must come within understanding distance*. Just as there is a hearing distance, says Campbell, there is an understanding distance. He is saying that however much we may otherwise be prepared to study the Bible our effort will be in vain if in our hearts and minds we stand beyond hearing and understanding distance. We must want to hear and understand.

When I recently spoke of this rule to one of our New Testament scholars, he was amazed that Mr. Campbell was so "modern" in his hermeneutics. In scholarly circles these days, he said, the emphasis is on "coming within understanding distance of the text." This is not the only instance in which Campbell anticipated modern scholarship. Not only did he provide his generation with a modern version of the New Testament, but he clearly distinguished between the kerugma (preaching) and the didache (teaching), anticipating by a hundred years C. H. Dodd, the British scholar who championed this position a generation ago. In such places as his "Sermon on the Law" Campbell also distinguished between the systems of the Old Testament and the New Testament, noting their appropriate applications. That was revolutionary in his day.

The rule of "understanding distance" is rooted in Scripture, which again and again enjoins, "Let him who hears understand." We may not understand when we hear because we do not hear aright, or we may not understand even when we hear aright because we do not want to understand. To understand is a matter of will — "Let him who hears understand," is thus addressed to man's will. It is a matter of getting one's "want-to" fixed. How often do we refuse to hear, or to understand when we do hear, because we don't want to be disturbed? Truth stings like an adder and cuts like a sword. Truth may make us free, as our Lord teaches, but freedom can be a painful experience. To come within understanding distance can be risky, a threat to one's ego, pride, self-esteem and even security itself.

If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know the "teaching," says the Lord in Jn. 17:7, which is an invitation to come within understanding distance. It shows how strongly Jesus believed in the freedom of the will. He was no determinist. Man is

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not driven by forces from within and from without that are beyond his control. He can *will* to do good or to do evil. He is in an important sense the captain of his own soul. He has will power, not simply a will. The man who wrote the book *Do Yourself A Favor, Love Your Wife* has Jesus on his side. Most of life's blessings (and curses) are closely related to what we will, and for the simple reason that we have to live with the choices we make. And do we not will those choices?

Jesus' parable of the sower is really the parable of the hearers. The point is not that there are different kinds of soils, which is obvious, but different kinds of hearers. Some can't or won't hear while others are hopelessly shallow, caught up in life's trivia and never giving the things that matter most a serious thought. They cannot come within understanding distance because they have too long sinned against the nobler instincts of the will. And so they have closed minds and closed hearts.

In this context our Lord gives a remarkable description of what we can be. Some hearers, he says, are those with "honest and good hearts" — not only good, which may stress sincerity, but honest and good, honesty pointing to the "want to," and determined will (desire) to understand and to do. The honest and good hearer is the one who comes within understanding distance.

This journal has different kinds of readers, and the difference is far more than that some read fast and some slow. In a recent mail came a letter from a new subscriber who not only wanted his subscription cancelled, but he had to tell the editor how heretical he is and how wrong his views are. He had not the slightest gratitude for the well-meaning person who paid for his subscription who must have supposed he would give the things said at least passing consideration. He seemed rather to resent it. Everything was negative. To him we are not only wrong about some things, which could well be true, but about everything. Yet he made no effort to apprise us of wherein we err. We are simply wrong (period). We obviously did not have him within "reading distance," and it may be our fault. And yet the letter reflected fear and insecurity, and I felt compassion for the dear brother. He read until he was threatened, then stopped and wrote the offender an irate letter. He was really crying for help, "Please don't threaten my security!" I understand and I love him, but I can't help him. He may not be beyond God's mercy, but he is beyond understanding distance. Thank God for that distinction!

Far more often a letter will say such as "I may not always agree, but you make me think," and sometimes they concede that thinking new thoughts and entertaining new ideas is a bit painful. But they are willing to think and even appreciate being "made" to think. Such ones have come within reading distance. How readest thou? I hope you do not do to yourself what the man did to his son when he delivered him to his school master with the instruction, "Don't teach him anything that he doesn't already know." As tragic as it is, that is the mentality that pervades our society, including our churches.

Jesus' call for simplicity, expressed as "If your eye be single, then your whole

body shall be full of light," is a call for the child-like faith that wants to understand because it is a loving parent that speaks. The child is within understanding distance because it has not learned the distractions of pride and greed. We are "whole" when the eye is good, and only then do we see through the blur of arrogant self-will.

If we approach the Bible with single eye, with a child's simple trusting faith, we will be true to the greatest rule of interpretation of them all, and we will be within understanding distance. This will serve us better than all the commentaries that money can buy. — *the Editor*

DO WE SHOOT OUR WOUNDED?

A former Oklahoma state senator for many years told me a story that I can't quite shake. I pass it along to you because, even though it is painful, it bears a message that we in Churches of Christ need to hear. The senator is an exemplary Christian, demonstrating that one can be both a devoted Christian and an able politician. He was in fact for many years the majority leader on the senate floor. I met this good brother on two successive trips to Lawton, Oklahoma, the first time when I spoke at a Church of Christ and the second time when I addressed a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Between the two visits he had left the Church of Christ and had found a haven at the Christian Church, which happens to be the church he attended with his family as a boy growing up.

One night when the senator was working late on affairs of state with a state representative, the subject turned to religion. The representative was surprised that the esteemed senator was a member of the Church of Christ. With a little encouragement the representative explained himself by saying, "All I can say is that you Church of Christ folk are the only people I know who shoot your wounded."

We shoot our wounded! It is a severe charge, a blow to the solar plexis. How dreadful that anyone, much less an intelligent statesman, would have such an image of us! And yet in my heart I know there is truth to his charge. The criticism this time was not that we think we are the only true church, but that we unmercifully reject some among us when they need us the most -- the erring, the wayward, the weak, the broken, the thinkers.

We may not know precisely what the representative had in mind when he made this criticism, but most all of us in Churches of Christ have a good idea what he was referring to. The senator's wife told me that her husband has told that story on numerous occasions to Church of Christ people, and only to Church of Christ people, and no one has ever questioned the validity of the criticism. They rather eye each other acquiescently as if the representative's charge conforms to their own experiences.

Like all churches, we have our "wounded" who are in danger of falling by the wayside. There are many divorced among us who suppose they have committed the unpardonable sin because of the way we have responded to their tragedy. They soon learn that it makes a difference in the way they are treated. They often feel rejected and unwanted. If they dare to remarry and start over, they do not get much help from the church. We often lay down "forbidding to marry" laws, which the Bible associates with false teachers, and insist that the divorced cannot marry and when they do they have to divorce still again in order to obey our oppressive demands. So, when our people go through a painful divorce and need us most, we shoot them dead. They often go from church to church in search of the grace of God and acceptance, but as often as not they drop out and get lost in the crowd of other wounded and rejected people.

Many of our youth have to go through the rude awakening that our love for them is not unconditional. Back in the 60's (and sometimes still) our kids who came home from college with long hair and/or a beard learned that such behavior made a difference as to how they were loved and accepted both at home and at church. I've known cases of where our girls were virtually disowned for marrying a Baptist, which we have branded "marrying out of the church." Our youth have gotten the message that we love them if they are straight like us. They are not to be radical about any "cause," and they are not to take religion all that seriously. They are to chase the dollar like the rest of us, and the more "successful" they are the better. If they get with the wrong crowd and travel the fast lane on dope and booze and all the rest, we will not love them any more. We will shoot them, along with our kids who are gay. We even shoot them if they go to the wrong church or if they have any thoughts that run counter to our Church of Christism. Many of our youth, long after they have families of their own, learn that when they visit the folk back home they can talk about anything except religion.

It is common for us to call out the firing squad when one of our preachers no longer "walks in the light," which may be no more than that he is resolved no longer to be a sectarian, nor a dogmatist, nor a legalist, nor an obscurantist. We will honor him with position and wealth as long as he follows the party line, or at least watches what he says, but let him open up his heart and say what he really believes, and get turned on to the grace of God and the catholicity of the church, and we crucify him. A growing, thinking minister who seeks to lead his people into a broader, freer fellowship is "wounded" in the sense that he is breaking with tradition. It is a time when he needs us most, and we need him, but we stone him to death. And the "orthodox" preachers will hold the coats of those who cast the stones.

Our doctrine must be kept "pure" at all costs. Only recently I was reading autobiographical notes of one of our missionaries in Japan who came to America to study when he was a young man. Since it was a novelty to have a native Japanese around, one of "our" persuasion, he was enthusiastically received among our churches, until it was learned that he was premillennial. He was at once transformed

into one of our wounded, and he was quickly dispatched. He tells how he was literally ushered out of some churches, and an elder in a strange city who he understood was to provide him shelter for the night, turned him away from his door and out into the street with nowhere to go. A foreigner in a strange land, rejected by his own people because he did not say the right things about the millennium! The elder was of course, like the Pharisees of old, defending the faith. The Pharisees helped to nail their "wounded one" to a cross.

It happens to missionaries in the field. They are sometimes left high and dry with their support cut off when they veer from the party line. College professors are not immune to being shot if they become wounded. Not a few have been fired, and that without due process in violation of their civil rights, for going to the wrong church, for attending a Full Gospel Men's Fellowship, or for quietly speaking in tongues in their own private lives.

I recently heard a surprisingly high figure on how many ex-Church of Christ preachers are attending a big congregation in the Dallas-Ft. Worth metroplex, all of whom have given up on trying to cope with the system. Some had to quit because of a failed marriage, others because they were branded as "liberals," and still others because they couldn't hack all the legalism and authoritarianism. So they are now in business or work as counsellors. The Oklahoma statesman might see them as part of our morgue, killed through our cruel neglect and rejection.

Even the rank and file among us are not immune to being shot if they become wounded. The worst thing that can happen to our intelligent lay people is for them to think for themselves. If they dare to question our sectarianism, such as our indefensible position that it is a sin for anyone to sing with an instrument, they will likely be asked to give up any class they teach, resign from any office they hold, and otherwise take no leading role. Our wounded ones, who may well be our most creative ones, are to ask no questions, rock no boats, and they certainly are not to challenge "the authority of the elders." Neither are they to question what is said from the pulpit, which is the minister's sacred desk, who may be "the senior minister" whose interpretations are of course right. After all, he's been to a Christian college and knows when you don't. You can of course continue to give your money and warm a pew, but don't dare to think. If you do think, keep your mouth shut!

We have many such wounded ones in our churches who have been shot, but they won't lie down and die. They are sometimes unloved and unwanted, or at least eyed with suspicion, but they hang in and won't leave. They are our heroes who are committed to effecting a change. They may not hear or see much of the grace of God or the gentleness of Christ, but they are themselves manifestations of that grace and gentleness.

There is good news in all this. I would respond to the Oklahoma representative by conceding that we do indeed often shoot our own wounded, and that is to our shame, but that as a whole our people do not want it that way! And we are not the

only church that rejects some of its people at a time when they need help the most. It is sin as old as Pharisaism. All of us who are guilty are victimized by a legalistic system that elevates "being right" above the cries of a broken heart.

The good news is that most of our people really care. They are among the sweetest and most committed Christians in the world. In their hearts they want to reach out to the wounded with loving acceptance and forgiveness. They are stymied by a system, but not for always. Christ is moving in among us as never before and we are changing.

And I would say to the representative that the good senator is not guilty of shooting our wounded. Many, many others are not guilty, and when they see it happen they themselves become wounded, and they wait and hope, silently perhaps, for the day when it will no longer be that way. They will overcome! -- *the Editor*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ALEX!

Today, Monday, September 12, 1988, is the 200th birthday anniversary of Alexander Campbell. Ouida went with me over the weekend to the First Christian Church (Disciples) in Lawton, Ok. to celebrate the Campbell Bicentennial in a special way. I gave three addresses on Campbell and the church had something of a birthday party for the old pioneer, to which they invited other congregations of the same heritage. We had folk present from the Independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ as well as other Disciples churches.

A banner across the wall of the fellowship hall read "Happy Birthday, Alex." And we sang "Happy Birthday" to him on his 200th! I assured them that the old uncle would delight in our frolic, for he was a great believer in the ongoing fellowship between the community of God in heaven and on earth. After all, if we are indeed compassed about by that "great cloud of witnesses," which the Scriptures testify to, why can't there by some fellowship with those who have gone on? When I am asked if I believe in communicating with the dead, I give a two-part reply. First, the so-called dead are not really dead; second, I believe that we can talk to them but that they can't talk to us. And that is the sorcery or necromancy that the Bible condemns: the presumption of receiving information from the dead and thus predicting future events. We are on safe ground surely if we only talk to or enjoy fellowship with the departed with no expectation that they will communicate with us.

So, if it is in your heart to go right on talking to your loved ones who have gone on, I think you should do so, for "death" does not necessarily end the fellowship that has existed for a lifetime. If we regret not having said "I love you" or "Forgive me," it may not be too late. Such things are often said over the open casket, and who is

to say that such cries from the depth of our souls are not heard in another world? And if you are edified by some great idea while reading C. S. Lewis and you have the urge to thank him, go ahead. He may be closer than you think. And if a church wants to sing "Happy Birthday" to Alexander Campbell, great show!

Early this morning I called Carl Ketcherside so as to celebrate the old hero's birthday with him. I explained that I'd rather call Campbell himself, but that had its problems and that he'd do as next best. He understood, and he remembered that it was Campbell's 200th. To celebrate I read Carl part of what I consider Campbell's greatest outburst of sacred eloquence, which was given in his debate with Robert Owen. I thought it would be comforting to a man who had just buried the woman who had been his wife for 60 years. It is as follows:

> It is not the ordinary affairs of this life, the fleeting and transitory concerns of today or tomorrow; it is not whether we shall live all freemen or die all slaves; it is not the momentary affairs of empire, or the evanescent charms of dominion -- nay, all these things are but the toys of childhood, the sportive excursion of youthful fancy, contrasted with the question, What is man?, Whence came he?, Where does he go? Is he a mortal or an immortal being? Is he doomed to spring up like the grass, bloom like a flower, drop his seed into the earth, and die forever? Is there no object of future hope? No God -- no heaven -- no exalted society to be known or enjoyed? Are all the great and illustrious men and women who have lived before we were born, wasted and gone forever? After a few short days are fled, when the enjoyments and toils of life are over; when our relish for social enjoyments, and our desires for returning to the fountain of life are most acute, must we hang our heads and close our eyes in the desolating and appalling prospect of never opening them again, of never tasting the sweets for which a state of discipline and trial has so well fitted us.

Speaking to a crowd of 1200 in the Methodist Church in Cincinnati in 1829, Campbell moved many to tears by this appeal to eternal verities. He concluded his challenge to infidelity with these words:

> The real question is not what we shall eat, nor what we shall drink, unless we shall be proved to be mere animals; but it is, shall we live or die forever? Shall spring ever visit the mouldering urn? Shall day ever dawn on the night of the grave?

While Carl was touched by these eloquent words, I was not quite satisfied that I had done Mr. Campbell justice on his 200th birthday, so I called Cecil and Lea Hook to celebrate further. I told Cecil that he reflected the spirit of Alexander Campbell in our day because he has the guts to speak out boldly about issues troubling the church in this generation. Like Campbell, he doesn't mind getting his nose bloodied if need be, a trait all too rare these days. In memory of the old reformer I read to Cecil and Lea from the last essay Campbell ever wrote. You too will appreciate it, taken as it is from the 1865 issue of the *Millennial Harbinger* and written only a few weeks before he took to his death bed:

> The present material universe, yet unrevealed in all its area, in all its tenantries, in all its riches, beauty and gradeur, will be wholly regenerated. Of this fact we have full assurance: since he that now sits upon the Throne of the Universe, has pledged his word for it, saying, "Behold, I will create all things new;" -- consequently, new tenantries, new employments, new pleasures, new joys, new ecstasies. There is a fulness of joy, a fulness of glory, and a fulness of blessedness, of which no living man, however enlightened, however enlarged, however gifted, ever formed or entertained one adequate conception.

What a faith to live and die by! Cecil and I were impressed that Campbell had such an exalted view of the glory that is yet to be revealed that he could only conclude that no person, however learned and gifted, has ever formed an adequate conception of its wonders.

In my presentations at Lawton I introduced Mr. Campbell as a man who wore many hats, and he wore them all with uncommon effectiveness. Along with his friend and neighbor, Dr. Robert Richardson, he experimented in "scientific" farming, especially in raising Merino sheep. His leadership in a wool grower's association brought him into contact with John Brown, the abolitionist, who was also in the wool business. Research into Brown's life has turned up letters that he wrote to Campbell concerning problems they shared in getting a fair price for their wool. But Campbell would never have gone along with Brown in either his abolitionist views or his revolutionary methods. He was anti-slavery and freed his own slaves, but he was persuaded that abolitionism was a radical solution to a very complex problem.

Mr. Campbell also became an extensive landowner, owning land as far west as Illinois. He donated part of the land that became the campus of the Illinois State University in Normal. And how many Americans, however enterprising, have built a college on their own farm? Campbell once owned most of what is now the town of Bethany.

He had his own publishing enterprise, sending out millions of items over a period of five decades: journals, hymnals, debates, theological works. Through these he disseminated his reformatory views, especially in the pages of the *Christian Baptist,* which he published for seven years, and its successor, the *Millennial Harbinger,* which was in its 37th year when Campbell died in 1866.

He also managed to get himself appointed as Bethany's first postmaster, which gave him franking privileges for all the mailing he did. He was obviously not without resources for all the enterprises he undertook. He even played a role in the engineering of the first turnpike through his part of Pennsylvania and Virginia. But no one to this day has succeeded in getting a really good road into Bethany itself.

Mr. Campbell was at his best on the platform, whether as teacher, preacher, lecturer, debater, or politician, and he was all of these. For many years he had a 6 a.m. class at Bethany College where he also served as the first president for a quarter of a century. He preached often at the Bethany Church of Christ and all over the

American frontier, and this may have been his most effective work, for in his preaching he opened up the Scriptures in a way that made the Bible an understandable book. A new hermeneutics he gave the people, as well as a new translation known as *The Living Oracles*. He lectured to professional organizations all over the country, especially on education and moral philosophy. Oddly enough, he was a favorite lecturer among the skeptics, even when he scored their disbelief. They admired his honesty, originality, and resourcefulness, and he was not their typical clergyman.

The reformer also advanced his cause in the debates he conducted, especially the ones with Bishop Purcell, where he represented the Protestant cause against the Roman Catholic, and Robert Owen, where he championed faith in God against the claims of infidelity, which was rampant on the frontier. He not only became more widely known, but he came to be seen as one who transcended the confines of any sect. In five well-chosen adjectives Mr. Owen described Alexander Campbell as many in that day came to see him. He was, Owen said, manly, learned, fair, honest, industrious. Others were to mention Mr. Campbell's industry. Considering the prodigious amount of work he did it must have been true. He was "manly" in the sense of being a gentleman, but without being handsome, and yet there is evidence that he was more than ordinarily attractive to women. When a woman follows you all the way from Scotland to America in order to join your church and serve your people, you must have an uncommon charisma. That same woman, an exemplary Christian who became a missionary for Campbell's cause in Australia, hailed Alexander Campbell as the most remarkable person she had ever known. And that was after living in his home in Bethany, ministering to his sick, burying his dead, and seeing "the Bishop," as the neighbors called him, in all those untoward trials that test one's mettle.

But Campbell's greatest compliment came from Gen. Robert E. Lee, who was an occasional visitor to the Campbell mansion. Borrowing from a tribute given to John Milton, the general said that Mr. Campbell would make a suitable delegate of the human specie if such a representative were needed in a gathering of creatures of superior worlds.

While Mr. Campbell was briefly in politics, serving in Virginia's 1829 constitutional convention, it was an uneasy assignment for him, for he was always dubious about a Christian's role in politics. While he futilely fought against slavery and for public schools at the convention, it was his weekend preaching that made his time in Richmond worth the while. At least a former president, James Madison, seemed to think so, for while he spoke highly of Campbell's role in the convention, he saw his greatness lying elsewhere: "But it is as a theologian that Mr. Campbell must be known. It was my pleasure to hear him often as a preacher of the gospel, and I regard him as the ablest and most original expounder of the Scriptures I have ever heard."

He was an engaging conversationalist, and some of his most effective teaching took place in parlors across the land following the preaching service, which was always at candle-lighting. He had a great sense of humor, never took himself too seriously, and was charming with his repartee. While visiting with him at Bethany and walking by the family cemetery, Robert Owen was led to say, "I have an advantage over the Christian in that I have no fear of death." Campbell replied, "But have you any hope in death?" The infidel conceded that he had neither fear nor hope in death. Then Campbell said, pointing to a nearby cow, "Then you're like that brute beast, chewing its cud and perfectly content, with neither fear nor hope in death!"

He was also a deeply pious man. He and his family, along with the guests who were nearly always there, had morning and evening devotionals. Mrs. Campbell would lead the singing, the children would recite memory verses, and Mr. Campbell would teach the Scriptures and converse. It says something about the kind of man Campbell was that he would bring an Indian boy home with him from the West and keep him for seven years in his home, providing him a Christian education.

Above all he was a reformer of the church, seeking to unite the Christians in all the sects through a restoration of the primitive faith. The ancient gospel was his constant theme. He carried his message of renewal all across the frontier of his adopted country, being one of the most travelled men of his time. He grew up with the country, so to speak, first travelling by foot, horseback, gig and buggy, and finally by stagecoach, steamboat, and railroad, "the cars" as he called them.

He did what he did because he was assured of the promise from Him who sat upon the throne, "Behold, saith he, I make all things new."

Happy Birthday, Alex! -- *the Editor*

Is it possible that a time may come when all shall think alike, and have the same opinions--seeing that no two minds are constituted alike; to say nothing of the variety of circumstances by which they are irresistibly influenced? To this question we answer, no. We agree with them that this is not within the range of probability. But let me ask in return, where, in his Word, does God require this of you? ....

The question is too vague and indefinite....the point to distinguish, viz:--*Ordinances are not opinions.* All the ordinances and appointments of the Lord Jesus, by himself and his Apostles, are positive and obligatory, and are all tangible to the senses. Therefore his ordinances and appointments do not admit of opinions at all. There is no place for opinion here. He institutes, he appoints, he commands; and what he has instituted, appointed and commanded, you who love will obey.--*W. H. Burford, Millennial Harbinger, Vol. 32, pp. 599-600.*

"THEY WON'T LET ME PREACH!"

Cecil Hook

"I would like to be a preacher," Sarah laments, "but in the Church of Christ, they won't let me preach because I am a woman." "Even though I am a man, they won't let me preach" Mark states sadly. "I tried preaching for awhile, but I always got into trouble because I did not adhere to the old, legalistic, exclusivistic line. After word got around that I was preaching something different, the churches would not let me preach. So I gave up."

My sympathy goes to both Sarah and Mark and I know something firsthand about what Mark was talking about, but both of these persons need to do some rethinking. Their limited understanding is a part of their problem. They have let a congregational system prevent their preaching when no congregation or association of churches has control over whether they can preach or not preach. None can forbid you to preach, whether you are male or female. As misdirected as we have become, we still have not set up a Bureau of Licenses.

A great part of our problem in this matter has been due to our expectation that the church supply us a pulpit or class with a semi-captive audience and hire us to expound our views which are unacceptable to the majority in the group. We have chained ourselves to the ready-made pulpit while there is a wide world out there to be evangelized and taught. You are commissioned by Christ to do it and have no need to ask elders or anyone else for permission to do it. You need not ask a church to sponsor you or pay you to do it. If God gave you the gift, use it! The spread of the message has always depended more upon dedicated disciples than church-sponsored programs. So, don't complain that you are not permitted to speak for there are many places besides the church pulpit and classroom where you can speak.

Our concept of preaching has been limited to the pulpit in our assemblies, without which most of us would not know where to start. It is only reasonable to expect to have to gain permission from the elders or group itself to use their forum. We must expect elders or groups to oppose presentations which vary from their accepted beliefs. They forbid women to address their group because of convictions, whether misdirected or not. How can we expect a group of disciples to hire us to be its "official spokesperson" when we violate their convictions? You do not even retain a person to mow your lawn who does it contrary to your liking.

Any congregation and its elders, if it has elders, has both the right and the responsibility to judge the appropriateness of what is sponsored and taught from the pulpit and classroom. While granting this, many of us devoutly wish that there were more openness for challenge of traditional orthodoxy. I, like many others, have met with much frustration and rejection while trying to bring reformation through the pulpit. Being realistic, however, I cannot hope for people to hire me to teach what they think is error.

Ladies, no one can stop you from preaching! In fact, no one objects to your preaching. Preaching is evangelizing. When Philip got into the chariot with the Ethiopian, he preached (evangelized) to him Jesus. You can preach (evangelize) Jesus to your friend as you ride along the highway or in other situations. No one objects to that. You have a divine commission to do it. If your friend happens to be a man, you can evangelize him. The number of men makes no difference. We have labored under a false notion that teaching is private instruction and preaching is public teaching; however, preaching is evangelizing, whether one person or a thousand, and teaching is the giving of instruction regardless of the circumstance in which it is done. There is no example of a person preaching to (evangelizing) the assembly of disciples; however, there were teaching, instruction, and prophecy in the assemblies of the saints. Preaching (evangelism) involves teaching or heralding the facts concerning the gospel (good news, the "evangel") and it is directed to the unconverted instead of those saints already converted. Saints need further indoctrination, but not evangelism.

Paul restricted women from teaching in the Corinthian assemblies, but he did not mention her preaching. Perhaps, that would be included in his prohibition of her "speaking"; yet, he had already indicated that she could properly pray and prophesy if her head were covered. Our women have always been evangelists, not in the sense of hired, professional, public evangelists, but in the private, but powerful, ministries that God has given her.

As to ladies teaching in our congregations, earlier this century we fought a battle which divided the church in order to grant them that opportunity. They teach in church-sponsored, ready-made pulpits in our classrooms. Surely, we have set some inconsistent limitations but, at least, we have recognized women as being qualified teachers as well as evangelists. So, ladies, you are approved for teaching and evangelism by our own admission.

Yes, there is a hitch which we are not evading. Women still are not permitted to address the undivided assemblies among our people. I can see the inconsistency of some of our limitations of their activity, but I do not have a simple solution for the problem. Perhaps, it is more a matter of conditioning than understanding that prevents my admission that Paul established that women can properly pray and prophesy in the assemblies and that he denied them that prerogative among the Greeks because of their abuse of the privilege and due to the culture shock that it brought.

The point of this essay, rather than trying to solve all of the problems, is to cause you to see that neither women nor men need to gain permission from any man or group in order to teach and preach. Forget about the assembly for a moment. There is a wide world for you to reach. As God has given you the gift, use it. Go to it!

Our concepts about teaching and preaching have been so assembly-centered and church-sponsored that much of the dynamic of the message through individual

initiative has been lost. While we would hope for the pulpit and classroom to sponsor reform, we recognize that spokespersons for reform have always had to do much of their work outside the systems and then let their messages gradually trickle down through the cracks in the established systems. And though people respond to the gospel during the singing of the "invitation song" in the assembly, I would venture to say that most of them were taught earlier by a woman.

Those who lead in the public assemblies get the notice by filling what we would term generally as honorary capacities. We do not choose the most godly and the most efficient to carry on our public services, but we pass around the honor of being in the spotlight. Is that what you want? That can be a very shallow understanding of what it means to be "working for the Lord." You, whether woman or man, can develop your own ministry of teaching and evangelizing which can be both effective and rewarding though it may not bring you stardom.

The pulpit is not nearly as important today as it has been in history. In the early church the people had to depend heavily upon the public proclamation and teaching of Spirit-filled persons. Even after the scriptures were compiled, they were not readily available to all and, besides, few were literate so as to be able to read them if they owned a copy. Throughout the centuries, the common man still had to depend mostly upon the pulpit and the system it represented for instruction. This situation gradually changed with the availability of the printed Bible and the improvement in literacy. Now, in our congregations, most everyone can read and has various versions of the scriptures to help in understanding. Also, there are periodicals, books, all sorts of study helps, correspondence courses, radio, television, tapes, video lessons, and private tutors readily available for teaching. Because of this change, the pulpit of today has lost much of its importance.

Any disciple today has the freedom to use these methods. In this essay I am not judging the appropriateness of a woman becoming a television or radio evangelist, for example, but I am simply saying that she does not have to ask me for my opinion or permission, nor for that of a congregation. Neither Sarah nor Mark can rightfully complain, "The church won't let me preach in its pulpit; therefore, I am forbidden to preach." -- *1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX . 78130.*

The actions of men are the best interpreters of their thoughts.-- *John Locke*

To will and not to do when there is opportunity, is in reality not to will; and to love what is good and not to do it, when it is possible, is in reality not to love it.--*Emanuel Swedenborg*

Our grand business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.--*Thomas Carlyle*

Visiting Other Churches...No. 9

RELIGION IN THE PHILIPPINES

A twelve day visit to the Republic of the Philippines does not make one an authority on any aspect of its culture, but I can do what I have been doing in this series, share my impressions of visits to other churches. But this time it is religion in Manila and Cebu rather than Denton, Texas, which is 10,000 miles from where I now sit at the Ignio Aquino International Airport, awaiting a flight to India.

The name Ignio Aquino is now part of the history of this restive nation. A few years back he was shot dead as he stepped from a plane only a short distance from where I sit. Noting that the new terminal was named for him, I asked the boy who drove me from the Wycliffe translators' guest house if he had ever seen Ignio Aquino. "Not personally," he said. "What did you think of him?," I asked. "He was a hero who sought to overthrow an oppressive dictatorship," he responded, which seems to reflect the thinking of most Filippinos. An imposing memorial bronze statue on one of Manila's boulevards of Ignio being shot on an exit ramp would suggest this. "Wouldn't Ignio be surprised that his wife is now president and that the oppressive dictator is banished from the country!," I ventured, and we agreed that great men often accomplish as martyrs what they would not accomplish in life, which is true even of our Lord. "And it is Jesus Christ who made us brothers," I finally said to him. "You are the younger brother and I the older." He smiled with delight.

That conversation reveals two predictable things about this unpredictable country: Most everyone speaks English, and nearly everyone is a "Christian," if you do not use that term too strictly. While there are some 100 languages spoken among the thousands of islands, English is the second language. The newspapers are in English as are signs, advertising, books, and business.

This makes for less difficulty for the older mission-minded Christian who has neither the time nor the inclination to learn a language to serve in a foreign field. Here she can "hit the ground running" by being able from the start to communicate with people who will listen. She should of course learn the people's first language to some degree, but this is more easily done on a bilingual basis. It is interesting how people will use two tongues shifting from one to the other as if they were one language.

So a couple could retire here, live comfortably on $1,000 a month, and serve meaningfully in a stragetic mission field. Better still, let those with special skills come and combat poverty, a blight to about half the populace, by teaching the people how to work with their hands. Productivity is the key to a nation's wealth, and non-

productivity hangs heavy over the Philippines. The people will work, and they are intelligent, but there is too little to do. If 100,000 Christian business men and women came to this "third world" country and started profit-sharing small businesses, thus creating jobs and markets (wealth), it would help bring the Kingdom of God to the Philippines. This is the way to eliminate the oppression of "Smokey Mountain" in Manila where an estimated three million people live in indescribable poverty, eking out a bare existence by rummaging in mountains of garbage. There are so many of them and they are deemed to be of so little value that bulldozers sometimes grind them into the garbage with impunity.

Upwards of 95% of the 60 million population are Roman Catholics who date back to the Spanish conquests 500 years ago. Protestant Christianity is represented by every conceivable sect, both imported and indigenous, including Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Iglesiani Christo (Church of Christ in Cebuano), an heretical cult of several millions formed around a charismatic leader. As in most countries of the world, the Seventh Day Adventists probably have the most constructive mission program, building both schools and hospitals of high quality.

There are scores of churches and schools of the Restoration tradition, representing most persuasions. There is not only little cooperation between them but they are often warring factions, setting the naturally gentle Filippinos at variance with each other over such issues as instrumental music, cooperation, and blood-eating. The last named being the only non-imported issue that I was exposed to. The spirit is so spiteful that the trustees of little Cebu Bible Seminary (Church of Christ instrumental) had second thoughts about my teaching for them for a week after inviting me to do so, lest they be criticized for having "a non-instrument man" on the premises. They met in emergency session the day I arrived and after extended debate voted 4 to 1 that I should be tolerated.

I explained to them that where I came from I was often not tolerated for the opposite reason—having fellowship with them—and that I usually do not garner so many positive votes! They soon saw, I think, that my intentions were peaceful, and we had a good time together. And I do not fault them for their reluctance to have me around for I realize how vicious the sectarian spirit can be. From past experience they had good reason to suppose that anyone from an opposing faction would flay them alive. But my basic reaction was *My God, what have we done to these humble Filippino people with our exported American factions!*

I visited two "other" churches while in the Philippines. A Filippino business man, an evangelical Roman Catholic that I met on the plane, took me to the massive and aged Sancta Ninos church, which was crowded with people praying the rosary and lining up to pray at the image of Sancta Ninos (Holy Child), who is the patron

saint of Cebus and worshipped by millions. I talked to several people who believe this doctrine, which was brought to the island 500 years ago by Magellen. "How can you worship something that doesn't exist?" I asked a young nurse. "There is no Holy Child, for he grew to be a man," I added. She was perplexed by my questions and conceded that the Savior in heaven is not a child, and would only say it was a tradition.

They seem to distinguish between the two, making the Holy Child a patron saint and Jesus the man the Savior. That the Roman church encourages and perpetuates such ignorance and superstition, century after century, is one reason for the plight of "the third world." Religion is often an obstacle to progress and enlightenment, and often opposes a Christianity that liberates.

When I stood with these poor deluded souls before the image of the Sancta Ninos, which they believe to be a mediator between themselves and God, I had the urge to quote that great truth from Scripture, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). When I did quote that crucial truth to Filippinos, they would only say, "It is tradition."

The other church I visited was the Union Church of Manila, and what a contrast it was to the traditions of Cebu. It is what a Christian church ought to be, fervent in Spirit, rich in fellowship, and strong in the Scriptures. Non-denominational and unsectarian, its lively service was all in English, and a full house for two morning services.

I especially appreciate the way the Lord's Supper was handled, as if it were following what we have suggested in this journal. Though individual cups were used, there was a single chalis on the table along with a sizable loaf of bread. The loaf, not crumbs or crackers, was lifted representing the unity we have in Christ, and the words of institution were emphatically proclaimed. Beautiful!—*the Editor*

THOUGHTS ON FELLOWSHIP

Carl Ketcherside

Carl's penetrating understanding of "fellowship" has made him a persuasive teacher on this subject. Here are some insightful quotations from Mission Messenger compiled by Lloyd A. Boyll:

"Our obedience to the demands of the gospel, introduces us into that state or condition called fellowship with God. We are in fellowship with each other only because we sustain the same relationship to Him." *M.M., Jan., 1958, p. 3.*

"On the divine side, fellowship is a union with and a participation in the life of Christ through the Spirit; on the human side it is a communion with brethren whose mutual relations were transformed by the Spirit." *M.M., Jan., 1958, p. 3.*

"One of the most tragic misconceptions is based on the idea that fellowship is synonymous with, or equivalent to, endorsement of everything the other 'fellow' may hold or advocate." *M.M., Feb., 1958, p. 4.*

"Every baptized penitent believer on this earth is my brother, and we are in fellowship, because we are a part of the brotherhood of Christ... I am in fellowship with every saved person on this earth, that is, if I am saved!" *M.M., Feb., 1958, p. 5.*

"(1John 1:3)...Now, if God being perfect, can fellowship us in our ignorance and imperfection, why do we set up a standard for others which he did not set up for us?" *M.M., Feb., 1958, p. 4.*

"Fellowship is not endorsement of another's views. It is not agreement with opinions of another, but love for the person which transcends his views and yours. It is a state or relationship in Jesus. We are called into fellowship by the gospel. Nothing should ever be made a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. We do not come into the fellowship by agreement upon opinions; we should not disrupt it because of disagreement over such. If fellowship in Christ was conditioned upon perfect agreement, there would be no place for forbearance, and the instruction to 'forbear one another in love' would be useless." *M.M., May, 1959, p. 12.*

OUR CHANGING WORLD

This issue will reflect the fact that much of it was written in airports and on airlines around the world—Seattle, Seoul, Manila, Bangkok. I send the stuff to Ouida and she feed it to the computer and makes it "camera ready." She has now been at my side for 44 years and most of those years we have had the responsibility of this paper which we both consider a labor of love, especially when we can do it together! As I grow older and find it more and more difficult to be absent from her, I have resolved that this is my last extended journey without her.

In Calcutta I visited the mission of Mother Teresa, which is only a stone's throw from a huge and busy Hindu temple. Seeing the proximity of the two, one can appreciate the story of how the high priest of the temple summoned the police to remove Mother Teresa's mission. Noting what she was doing for the dying on the streets, they told him that when he started doing what she was doing, they would remove her. When the Hindu priest himself came down with cholera, Mother Teresa included him in her works of mercy. I counted upward of 100 beds (cots side by side) in two wards where the dying are allowed to die with some dignity. While we were there one wretched soul was carried away on a stretcher, covered with a sheet by two seminarians wearing masks, who volunteer to help the Indian nurses. The poor soul died with a loving hand holding his rather than alone on a street with the indifferent masses passing him by. I told my missionary companion, Ralph Harter, who has been here 41 years, that what impressed my dear Ouida was that Mother Teresa tells her nurses that they are not only to do such work but to do it with joy. This is confirmed by the various reminders printed on the walls, one of which reads, "Let every action of mine be something beautiful for God," and another, "All only for Jesus."

In Calcutta I stayed with a Christian Indian family, which included three grandchildren. One evening I was walking the neighborhood with my host, L. M. Kundu, who speaks Bengali and English. He pointed to preparations being made for a large altar on which sacrifices will be offered to the Hindu goddess Durga, a favorite of this area, during an upcoming pageant. The people will dance before the idol and offer garlands. Other parts of India will serve other idols, "lords many and gods many!" My host told me that his Hindu friends claim that they really do not worship these idols but the one true God who stands behind them. I asked him if he believed this was true. "No," he insisted, "they do not worship anything except themselves." This old Indian believer may well have named man's basic sin the world over—he worships himself rather than the God who created him.

In India I also, with some difficulty, visited the grave of William Carey, one of the early missionaries to India, who came from England in the 1790's. I remembered that our own Archibald McLean, first president of the American Foreign Christian Missionary Society, respectfully visited Carey's tomb when he came to India a century ago to encourage Disciple missionaries. Carey's grave, in an ill-kept cemetery, is in Serampore, some 15 miles from Calcutta, less than a mile from the college he founded.

READER'S EXCHANGE

Keep up your gadfly activities. I was raised in Arizona and used to ponder the usefulness of such critics as gadflies. At least they kept an old horse who was sleeping from falling to the ground by constantly buzzing around him. — *Curtis Stamps, Whippany, N. J.*

I have enjoyed your articles on your visits to other churches. I appreciated your last observation, "We have much more in common than differences." I find this true as I serve the First Baptist Church in Tulare.

I remember our visit to the Mormon temple in Los Angeles. I appreciated your gracious questioning of the elder. — *Bill Johnson, Tulare, Tx.*

I think this matter of reason is at the root of some of our failures as a Restoration Movement. We suppose that we cannot believe anything unless it fits into a syllogism. This being the case our faith will be in reason and logic or self more than in God. — *Paul Du Bois, Arlington, Tx.*

Good news from the "Wrestling with God" project. We are moving ahead with our plans to produce a quality dramatic film on the life of Alexander Campbell and his movement, one worthy of TV and cable